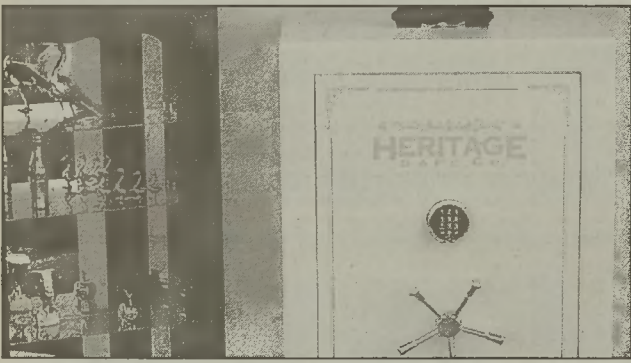


Christmas gifts that are out of box



For the person who wants to keep everything — a safe.

By Cherise F. Hodges
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

'Tis the season to give gift that won't end up in a department store's return bin.

That's what Clarence Tillman did when he went to Hyatt Gun Shop.

He didn't buy a gun or fancy knife; Tillman bought a custom-made safe to protect his home and valuables.

Larry Hyatt, owner of the shop, said people drive a long way to his Wilkinson Boulevard store to purchase

a high end safe. "It's an interesting gift," Hyatt said.

The safes he sells aren't the traditional bulky, gray monstrosities with the steering wheel combination locks on them, Hyatt said.

"These safes are pretty. They fit into normal houses on normal floors," he said.

Christmas is a busy season for the gun shop, Hyatt said. "Many people want the safes delivered as a surprise."

During the holidays, Hyatt says he sells 70 to 80 safes, which became a hot item

after the Columbine incident in Colorado. "People wanted to lock up their guns so that no one could steal it," he said.

The safes hold more than guns. "They become multi-purposing," Hyatt said. "People use their safes to keep their papers and jewelry. A lot of people

find that their safes aren't big enough."

If home security isn't your loved one's thing, how about sending a home cooked meal. Something Classic Café in Uptown Charlotte will prepare fresh baked muffins, coffee and grits to send to your loved ones far and near.

But unlike some national chains, nothing is prepackaged, said Abby de Montford, manager of the café. "All of our baked goods and nut goods are homemade," she said. "This is like sending a

home cooked meal."

The Something Southern Basket from the café includes cranberry ham biscuits, cheddar pecan wafers and spicy pimiento cheese. And for those with a sweet tooth, the Nut To Be Outdone basket has the something classic choo choo mix of cashews, chocolate chips and cherries, the signature harvest mix of yogurt pretzels, golden raisins walnuts and sun-dried cranberries.

Electronic gadgets always make good gifts, if dinner or sugar isn't the flavor for loved ones. A popular item for the older crowd, according to the Electronic Boutique manager Darrell Brothers, is the Atari Classic 10 game console.

"This is a classic Atari controller that has 10 games built into the controller and you just hook it up to the TV," Brothers said. "We see a lot of wives buying it for their husbands. It's really popular with people 25 and above," he said.

Welfare moms' college education get a helping hand

By Mary Tessier
WOMEN'S ENews

WASHINGTON — Heidi Hart was 15 and scared when she found out she was pregnant. The high school sophomore in Westbrook, Maine, had grown up with an abusive father, and her mother was struggling to raise five children with the help of federal and state assistance. The teen-ager was afraid of becoming an example of a failed teen mother.

"I was a kid dealing with a lot of crap," says Hart, now 26. "I felt terrified that I was sentencing my daughter to a life like mine."

With the help of at-school child care and a supportive family, Hart was able to finish high school.

Then Hart took a step for a teen-aged welfare mother that would be impossible in most of the nation. She

enrolled at the University of Southern Maine as part of the state's Parents as Scholars program and still received federal and state benefits, without time limits. She graduated in 2001 with a bachelor's degree, and now holds a job working with young parents at a social service agency. Her salary of about \$30,000 carries full medical and dental benefits. Hart has also just received a grant from the Maine Women's Fund to build a mentor network for welfare recipients who want to attend college.

Only Maine 'Stops the Clock'

Many states and cities have also seen the benefit of permitting single parents receiving welfare to pursue higher education. Many allow education and federal welfare to commingle to a degree, but they impose time

limits and work requirements that limit the extent to which recipients, in reality, can pursue higher educa-

tion. In New York City, for example, it took a lawsuit for education to count as "work."

The Charlotte Post
(704)376-0496

PUBLIC MEETING

The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) will hold a public meeting to receive comments on proposed changes to bus service in the West Boulevard area.

A meeting is planned for:

January 5, 2004
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

West Boulevard Public Library
Community Room
2157 West Boulevard
Charlotte, NC

For more information or for transit service to this meeting, call 704-336-RIDE or 866-779-CATS or visit us online at www.ridetransit.org.



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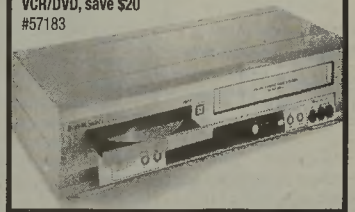
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